

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8428
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 3496

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MARR, IS, LE, SY
SUBJECT: SYRIAN VIEWS ON DEVELOPMENTS IN LEBANON

SUMMARY: DEPFONMIN KADDUR STATED THAT WHILE SYRIA CONDEMNS FRANGIEH ASSASSINATION, IT WILL NOT BE PROVOKED TO ACT RASHLY. ADF WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY OUT PRES. SARKIS' ORDERS TO MAINTAIN INTERNAL SECURITY. THIS NEW THREAT TO LEBANESE CENTRAL AUTHORITY, HOWEVER, WILL UNDOUBTEDLY DELAY DESPATCH OF LEBANESE ARMY FORCES TO SOUTH.

1. CALLED ON DEPFONMIN KADDUR JUNE 19 TO OBTAIN SYRIAN VIEWS ON RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AND SOUTH LEBANON. REGARDING SITUATION IN NORTH, KADDUR SAID SYRIA CONDEMNED FRANGIEH MASSACRE AS A CRIMINAL ACTION WHICH HAD INCREASED TENSIONS AND POSED NEW THREATS TO STABILITY IN NORTHERN AREA. SYRIA, HE SAID, BELIEVED THERE WAS A LINKAGE BETWEEN
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DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AND SOUTH. IT WAS NO COINCIDENCE THAT FRANGIEH MASSACRE HAD TAKEN PLACE ON VERY DAY SET FOR ISRAEL'S FINAL WITHDRAWAL. THE AIM WAS TO CREATE SITUATION WHERE LEBANESE STATE WOULD LOSE SOVEREIGNTY IN NORTH AT SAME TIME AS IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE GAINING SOVEREIGNTY IN SOUTH. THIS HAD CREATED SERIES OF NEW OBSTACLES AND DIFFICULTIES FOR THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENTS.

2. WHEN I NOTED THAT SEVERAL SYRIAN EDITORIALS HAD CHARACTERIZED FRANGIEH ASSASSINATION AS AN ACT AGAINST SYRIA, KADDUR AGREED SAYING SYRIA HAD BECOME MORE INVOLVED OWING TO RESULTANT INCREASED INSTABILITY IN THE NORTH. THOSE WHO HAD PREPARED THIS CRIME KNEW IT WOULD CREATE NEW TENSIONS AND ACTED FOR THIS PURPOSE. BUT IF THEY HOPED SUCH DEVELOPMENTS WOULD PUSH SYRIA TO TAKE NEW POSITIONS THEY WERE IN ERROR. SYRIA WOULD NOT BE LED INTO RASH ACTS AND WOULD REMAIN FIRM IN ITS WELL-KNOWN POSITION IN LEBANON IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT SARKIS AND THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT. THE ADF, KADDUR REMINDED ME, WAS UNDER THE COMMAND OF PRESIDENT SARKIS. WHEN HE HAD LEARNED THAT ZHORTA WAS UNDER ATTACK HE HAD SENT ADF TO HELP LIFE THE SIEGE. IT WAS NORMAL THAT ADF WOULD PURSUE CRIMINALS INVOLVED. THIS ACTION, HOWEVER, HAD BEEN LIMITED.

3. ASKED WHAT CHANGE THESE DEVELOPMENTS MIGHT BRING IN TRADITIONALLY COOPERATIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN SYRIA AND THE PHALANGE, KADDUR REPLIED THAT SYRIA WAS NOT FOR OR AGAINST ANY PARTICULAR PARTY IN LEBANON. TO THE CONTRARY, SYRIA WAS READY TO SUPPORT AND COOPERATE WITH ANY PARTY OPPOSED TO PARTITION AND MASSACRES. LIKEWISE, SYRIA WOULD OPPOSE ANY PARTY SEEKING DIVISION OF LEBANON OR RENEWAL OF FIGHTING. KADDUR HERE MADE STRONG STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF LEGITIMATE LEBANESE AUTHORITY, AFFIRMING THAT

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SYRIA WOULD ACCEDE TO ANY REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE BY PRESIDENT SARKIS. LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER, MUST CONSIDER WHAT ACTIONS IT DESIRED TO TAKE AND THEN SEEK SYRIAN COOPERATION. SYRIA HAD NO WISH TO OVERSTEP OR ACT IN PLACE OF THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY IN LEBANON.

4. TOLD KADDUR US WAS PLEASED THERE HAD NOT BEEN AN OVER REACTION AFTER THE FRANGIEH ASSASSINATION. WE ALSO HAD CONDEMNED IT AND HAD SENT OUR CHARGE IN BEIRUT TO OFFER CONDOLANCES TO FORMER PRESIDENT FRANGIEH. WE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT SYRIA HAD AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY IN PRESERVING LEBANESE SECURITY AND THAT IN GENERAL IT WAS CARRYING IT OUT WELL DESPITE PROVOCATIONS. I ASKED KADDUR WHETHER HE THOUGHT THERE WAS ANYTHING THE US MIGHT DO TO HELP IN FORESTALLING NEW CYCLE OF VIOLENCE. HE SAID HE HAD NO SPECIAL IDEAS. QUESTION SHOULD BEST BE POSED TO LEBANESE GOVERNMENT SINCE IT WOULD NEED SUPPORT IN WHATEVER IT DECIDED TO DO.

5. TURNING TO SITUATION IN SOUTH, KADDUR NOTED THERE WAS CURRENTLY A STATE OF CONFUSION AS TO WHO REPRESENTED LEBANESE ARMY IN THE AREA. IT WAS ILLOGICAL AND UN-

ACCEPTABLE, HE SAID, THAT ISRAEL SHOULD DECIDE WHO REPRESENTED THE LEBANESE ARMY OR EVEN THAT UN SHOULD DECIDE THIS QUESTION. THIS WAS DECISION FOR LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO MAKE. HOW, HE ASKED, COULD SYRIA WORK WITH AN OFFICER SUCH AS SAAD HADDAD WHO HAD TRAVELED FREQUENTLY TO ISRAEL AND HAD BEEN PHOTOGRAPHED WITH WEIZMAN? SYRIAN POSITION ON HADDAD WAS CLEAR THAT HE IN NO WAY REPRESENTED THE LEGITIMATE LEBANESE AUTHORITY.

6. IN DISCUSSION KADDUR BACKED OFF HIS STRONG INITIAL STATEMENT RECOGNIZING THAT GOL HAD SENT ORDERS TO HADDAD AND THAT IT WAS UNREALISTIC TO EXPECT UN FORCES TO TRY TO OCCUPY CHRISTIAN-HELD AREAS BY FORCE. HE ALSO AGREED THAT HADDAD'S CONTROL WAS LIMITED AND AT TIMES NEARLY NON-CONFIDENTIAL

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EXISTENT IN HIS OWN AREA. I TOLD HIM USG WAS URGING ISRAEL TO USE INFLUENCE WITH CHRISTIANS BOTH IN ORDER TO ASSURE UNIFIL INSTALLATION AND ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN CHRISTIAN AREAS AND IN ORDER TO PREVENT EXTREMIST CHRISTIAN MILITIA FROM PROVOKING PALESTINIANS. KADDUR SAID HE WAS PLEASED TO HEAR US WAS RAISING THIS MATTER WITH THE ISRAELIS. US WAS DOING THE RIGHT THING. IN FACT, HE SAID, IF ISRAEL WANTED TO, IT COULD EXERCISE CALMING INFLUENCE ON DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH LEBANON, TOO.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DAMASCUS 3496

7. RESPONDING TO QUESTION HOW LATEST DEVELOPMENTS HAD AFFECTED SENDING LEBANESE ARMY FORCES INTO SOUTH, KADDUR REITERATED THAT DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH AND SOUTH WERE LINKED. LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH WERE HANDICAPPING GOL AND COMPLICATING DESPATCH OF EVEN SYMBOLIC FORCE TO THE SOUTH. GOVERNMENT NOW WAS FACED WITH NEW SECURITY PROBLEM THREATENING WHOLE COUNTRY. THIS WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SOUTH AND ITS RAMIFICATIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE THOROUGHLY CONSIDERED.

8. ON LEBANESE/PALESTINIAN RELATIONS, KADDUR SAID AT THE MOMENT HADDAD WAS A GREATER PROBLEM THAN PALESTINIANS. PLO WAS COOPERATING WITH GOL AND ALSO WITH UNIFIL. WHEN GOL WAS READY TO SEND FORCES SOUTH THIS QUESTION COULD BE WORKED OUT. RESPONDING TO MY QUESTION, KADDUR SAID NOW WAS NOT THE TIME TO CONSIDER WHETHER ADF MIGHT MOVE ITS FORCES SOUTHWARD. IT SEEMED, HE LAMENTED, CONFIDENTIAL

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THAT WHENEVER PRESIDENT SARKIS WISHED TO TAKE A DECISIVE STAND, NEW DIFFICULTIES WERE CREATED. "GOD SAVE THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT," KADDUR CONCLUDED.

9. COMMENT: THIS WAS A RATHER RITUALISTIC EXCHANGE OF VIEWS, WITH KADDUR ADHERING FIRMLY TO PRINCIPLE OF SARKIS CONTROL OVER ADF. HIS REMARKS NEVERTHELESS MADE CLEAR THAT SYRIA DID NOT INTEND TO BE PROVOKED INTO ANY RASH ACT BY THE FRANGIEH ASSASSINATION. IT ALSO WAS APPARENT THAT SYRIA DOES NOT SEE CLEARLY AT THIS POINT THE OUTCOME EITHER OF THE NEW CONFLICT IN THE NORTH OR OF THE PROBLEM POSED BY THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA IN SOUTH. UNTIL DIRECTION OF EVENTS BECOMES CLEARER, SYRIA WILL CONTINUE IN ITS ROLE OF ATTEMPTING TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN AREAS UNDER ADF CONTROL.
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